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THE KENNEY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL  
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

BY JOHN A. KENNEY, M.D.

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ONE-THIRD of a block from High Street, one of the city's busy thoroughfares, on West Kinney Street, stands a modest little structure with an attractive front. Engraved in a stone over the door of this building are the words: "Kenney Memorial Hospital, 1927." Within the door on the wall facing it is a bronze tablet with the following inscription: "In loving memory of his father, John Kenney, Sr. and his mother, Caroline Kenney, by their son, John A. Kenney, M. D." Thus is brought into prominence the names of these two humble ex-slaves, my forebears. I am exceedingly happy to be able to thus memorialize my father and my mother. In order that this memorial may be perpetuated, I have taken out a \$100,000 life insurance policy in one of the large insurance companies with the Kenney Memorial Hospital as the beneficiary.

I have four children, three boys and a girl. The oldest is thirteen years of age. It is my hope that at least one of them will catch sufficient of the spirit that has actuated me to enable him to take up the torch where I drop it, and build on this foundation for the family name, for the race, and for humanity, a structure that will challenge the respect and admiration of his compeers. I think it pertinent to give some little account of how the hospital came into being, a description of its physical properties, and a sketch of its purpose.

On September 1, 1924, I entered Newark. On September 1, 1927, the Kenney Memorial Hospital was opened with one patient. Up to date, February 14, 1928, we have had 205 patients. The highest number on any one day was 22. We have had 83 surgical operations. The hospital has accommodations for 30 patients.

In the summer of 1924, while yet at Tuskegee Institute, in response to a telegram from a real estate dealer, I sent



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Mrs. Kenney to Newark to inspect some property for a home. The site considered did not suit her. So she cast about till a building at 134 West Kinney Street was offered. This appealed to her and she contracted for it. Adjoining it was a vacant lot,—the only one on West Kinney Street. This lot contained a nice grassy lawn and much valuable shrubbery. It afforded a very pleasing outlook from the dining-room.

Although the contract she had made far exceeded the amount she was authorized to spend, she recalled how much I liked open ground and with the additional reasons that this would furnish an outlet for the children, also protection against an undesirable building adjoining us, she entered into a contract for it also. She returned home with fear and trembling because of these excessive obligations which she had assumed, but when she explained what she had done, I complimented her on her nerve. She had shown real business judgment and a foresight that was quite unusual. This lot is now the site of the hospital and made it possible.

On January 1, 1925, a beautiful sunny morning, I stood

at our dining-room window and gazed on this splendid lot. I pulled from my pocket my diary and wrote: "Some day we shall have a hospital on this lot." The only difference between my vision and its fulfillment is, I visualized the building on the rear of the lot and a nice little lawn in front. However it is just the reverse. The building rises sheer with the sidewalk, and the lawn is in the rear. That thought which I called my New Year's inspiration never left me. It dwelt with me by day and slept with me the few hours I ever sleep at night. Finally, when it had so completely obsessed me, I wrote in my diary again, in the fall of 1926. This time it was: "I shall build a hospital in Newark because I can't help it."

My next move was to visit individually four selected physicians, to find out whether they were willing to listen to my plans with a view to cooperating with me. Gaining an affirmative answer in each instance, I called a conference at my office and explained my plans. They did not carry. So my next move was to address the North Jersey Medical Society of which I am a member, soliciting their cooperation. But I did not succeed in arousing any interest by this method. So I went before the society at one of its regular monthly meetings and asked of its members individual loans of \$1000 per member on my notes to be paid in from one to two years with legal rate of interest. This plan also failed. During these various procedures, I had my architect at work on my hospital plans and specifications.

The class ahead of mine at Hampton Institute had as its motto: "Find a way, or make one." That motto has always appealed to me. Up to now I had not found a way. It was necessary to make it. The motto of my class at Hampton was: "Use what you have." I had the desire; I had the initiative; I had the courage. Did I have the ability? So with what I had, I sought a way. With my plans complete I went to my banker. He directed me to a mortgage and title guaranty company, as he stated his bank could not carry that form of risk. The same result met me at the mortgage and title guaranty company to which he directed me.

I was given a letter of introduction to an eminent physician who is also a director of a bank. He gave me an excellent audience for an hour and a half. He listened attentively to my proposition and then discouraged it from every angle. I believe this interview did a great deal more good though than had he accepted and encouraged my plans. First, it made me more determined to succeed. Second, it caused me to find means to combat and overcome some of the obstacles which he outlined.

My architect directed me to the head of another company with money to loan. As I unrolled my plans he seemed interested till he saw "hospital." At once his demeanor changed. He handed the plans back with the remark soon to become familiar: "We don't loan money on hospitals." Then a real estate agent, by appointment, took me to three financial institutions in Montclair. One said, "We don't loan on hospitals." Another said, "We can't handle it." Then he said, "We don't loan money outside of Montclair." Then he brought me back to Newark and secured an interview with the head of a large insurance company who does also a loan and mortgage business. It required just about one minute and a half for him to hear the object of our visit and reply, "We don't loan on hospitals." Then the agent escorted me, by advice of the insurance official, to a new financial institution, to be again advised that "We don't take this class of business."

By this time the situation was getting a little interesting, but I was all the more determined. So I began to think, and think hard. Surely there must be some way—I had to find it. I had addressed a letter to the public with advices concerning the hospital move. In this letter I stated that I did not want the hospital to be a liability, but an asset to the community. I went into the money market with an article for sale in which I had faith. I sought only a business man's chance. Not a penny did I ask.

While thinking of a way, it occurred to me that another hospital here, even though small, would mean more sales for the hospital supply houses. Maybe I could interest some of these. Therefore I presented by letter my proposition to them. All responded favorably, and it was through this avenue that the light appeared. One of the dealers came to see me. He was much interested but said that he could not personally finance it by reason of the fact that he was already tied up in two real estate deals, but that he had a friend who was the vice president of a bank and whom he would try to interest. So he later returned bringing with him the vice president of his bank. He was impressed favorably with the project, and the two arranged for an appointment with the president of the same bank. In an interview, lasting less than ten minutes, this official announced: "It is a good thing. It is much needed, and I believe you are the man to put it through. I'll see you out. Good day."

As an evidence of this gentleman's good faith, during the process of building, I found myself in immediate need of \$15,000. In just about three minutes he had made the loan,

taking my note in exchange for the money. Of all the debts I owe, there is not one that I regard as more binding. All of the others where large amounts are involved are secured by mortgages or other collateral, but this one is entirely on my honor, and it will be paid to the last penny. It is hardly necessary to say that my banking business was at once transferred to this institution.

If there is any one thing in connection with my three years' stay in Newark in which I take more pride than any other, it is the fact that in this brief period I have been able to make this favorable impression in the city's financial center.

With the above assurance and encouragement, after such a season of rebuffs and refusals, I called on the president of one of the largest building and loan associations in this section for a loan, with the result that between these two institutions my building plans were financed.

The hospital is equipped at a cost in excess of \$10,000. For this amount arrangements were readily made with individual dealers whose goods I selected. I am pleased to advise that I am meeting my obligations as they become due. The hospital is running pretty close to its capacity and the outlook is favorable.

The building is of brick, steel, and cement with an attractive stone and face brick front. It is two stories above the ground with a third story partially below the street level. It is fire proof in construction and modernly equipped. It has accommodations—divided into small wards, semi-private and full private rooms—for thirty patients. It is connected by a corridor over a nine-foot automobile driveway with my office building, thus making the two buildings the hospital.

The office building has sixteen rooms and is the administration building, consisting of reception rooms, offices, treatment, X-ray rooms, laboratory, storerooms, dining-rooms, quarters for help, and laundry.

The operating room and its equipment are modern in every detail. Other modern equipment consists of adjustable beds, bedside cabinets, medicine cabinets with mirrors built into the walls, hot and cold running water in every ward and room, silent electric annunciator system, electric refrigeration, electric water cooling, automatic oil-heating system, automatic hot-water system, electric dish washer, electric clothes washer, and electric ironer.

The personnel consists of a house physician, secretary, stenographer, eight graduate nurses, one matron, two maids, and two orderlies. Our service covers general medicine and



surgery, gynecology, obstetrics, and physiotherapy, including radium and the X-ray.

On coming into this field, after twenty-two years of active participation in uplift work at Tuskegee Institute, I was not content to engage in an ordinary private practice. The field was too big and the need too great. As I contemplated this great mass of our people, the majority of them recently from the South, I felt that here was work that needed to be done just as much as in the Black Belt of Alabama. I knew that I could not do much, but like every other citizen, I could do my bit. It appeared to me that there was no need among these people more urgent than methods for the improvement of their health and living conditions.

I felt then and I feel now, that a hospital, with a service that would appeal to the most exacting, that would act as a center from which would emanate health influences, would go a long way in helping to improve conditions. Aside from the regular hospital and office treatments, our plans comprise an out-patient's free clinic, monthly health meetings at the hospital, and a social service worker as a connecting link between the hospital and the public.

Already there has been organized and is actually functioning a women's auxiliary with one hundred fifteen members from Newark and a half-dozen or more surrounding towns and cities. The activities of this auxiliary furnish one of the most encouraging features of the work.

I herewith acknowledge my debt to Hampton, for it was largely due to the inspiration of my Hampton training that I was able to bring this venture to its present state. I cannot say that Hampton taught me to work. That honor goes to my beloved father and mother, for I cannot recall the day when I did not work. Hampton taught me the dignity of work. There I learned thoroughness. It was there that I for the first time learned the word "stick-to-itiveness." Had I not possessed some of that quality, I think I should have given up this task in the face of the rebuffs and discouragements I met. It was there I was taught faith. It was the faith I had in my proposition, faith in my fellow-man, and faith in God, that enabled me to stay at it despite the difficulties. May Hampton live long and continue its work of training the head, the heart, the hand of our boys and girls.